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SUBJECT: JORDANIAN MFA PROPOSING NEW, MORE LIBERAL LAW
GOVERNING ITS FOREIGN SERVICE

REF: AMMAN 4864

Classified By: Political Counselor Douglas A. Silliman for reasons 1.5
(B) and (D)

1. (C) MFA Legal Advisor Samer Naber told PolCouns recently that one of Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher's current highest administrative priorities is to pass through the cabinet a new law governing the Jordanian Foreign Service. Naber said the law, which he is writing, will incorporate at Muasher's request strict gender equality in hiring, compensation, benefits, and assignments. Jordan's tradition, Naber said, had been to hire unmarried women for its diplomatic service, but require that they resign or agree to very restricted careers if/when they married. He claimed that this new law, if passed by the cabinet and signed by the King, will be the most liberal law governing public sector employment in Jordan.

2. (C) In addition to gender equality, Naber said that Muasher wanted to enshrine in law a requirement for strong English language ability to apply for the Jordanian Foreign Service. Muasher believes that Jordanian diplomats must have sophisticated English to carry out both policy and increasingly important trade and investment promotion responsibilities abroad. Muasher had proposed to the cabinet that all/all applicants show proof of a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score of 600. However, Naber recounted, Muasher had run into opposition on this point from other ministries, especially the (generally non-English speaking) Interior Ministry. Eventually, Muasher convinced the cabinet to require a TOEFL score of 550 for all Foreign Service aspirants.

3. (C) The head of Jordan's Diplomatic Institute recently told visiting FSI Dean Kathy Peterson that Muasher also wants to create an examination process for both entry into and promotion within the Foreign Service, and that Muasher is stressing the need for leadership/management training for diplomats who have traditionally focused on "diplomacy." In addition, he said Muasher wants to increase the quality and frequency of economic training, as shown by the GOJ's efforts to bring all Jordanian Ambassadors back to Amman for a conference on economics and trade promotion (ref).

COMMENT

4. (C) The draft Foreign Service law and Muasher's emphasis on training reflect the forward-looking personal philosophy of the Foreign Minister, both in terms of gender equality and in preparing the Jordanian Foreign Service to integrate Jordan into the world economy. It is also instructive that something as innocuous as an English language requirement created a controversy that had to be solved at the cabinet level.
GNEHM